



site questions

Here are a few key issues to think about when looking at site options:

- 1.** Price: of course, this will be an important guiding issue in your site selection. Note that in order to compare ‘apples to apples’ between many sites, you will need to assemble several of the costs below.
- 2.** Proximity to utilities: one of the expensive elements of a potential site can be the costs of getting all the hookups to local utilities, or in many cases, setting up your own site specific utilities. As a start, ask about each of these areas:

Septic

If a site has the option to connect to city sewers, that can often be the most cost effective option. Still, many cities have significant connection fees. Ask your local municipality for a fee schedule. If you are not connected to city sewers, you will most likely need to set up a septic system. Ask your site contractor for what to expect on costs for typical septic systems in your area. Septic systems come in many types including above ground (a “mound”) and below ground, depending on your soils conditions.

Water

If a site has the option to connect to city water, that can often be the most cost effective option. Still, many cities have significant connection fees. Ask your local municipality for a fee schedule. If you are not near city water, you can expect to have to build a well or other individual water source. Ask your site contractor for what to expect on costs for typical water connections or wells in your area.

Electric

If your site has been built on previously, it’s likely you already have a solution for electric. If not, electric utility hookups costs can be incurred to set up a new pole, to trench electric lines, and so forth. Ask your local electric utility for a fee schedule.

- For clients interested in electric photovoltaic (“PV”) panels, mkD offers a service for helping clients get started on renewable energy options!

Gas

If you have access to below-ground gas lines, ask your local gas utility for a fee schedule. Otherwise, the good news with gas is that there is a relatively inexpensive distributed solution that already exists—propane tanks —if you do not have access to city gas lines.

- 3.** Challenging locations: mkD has had projects in hurricane zones, high wind zone, flood planes, earthquake zones, high snow load areas, many other challenging environments. The main thing to remember is to check your local code to see what kind of building requirements in the code are specific to these environmental issues. Typically, increased costs of reinforced foundations (often for seismic), strapping for high wind, tall piers for flood areas, etc., can add some extra costs. It's good to look into these early. Ask your site contractor for what to expect on typical challenges for a site you are considering.
- 4.** Environmentally-restricted areas: Being in a wetland, coastal area, endangered species area, or other environmentally regulated area can often add 3+ months onto the permitting process, and potentially unexpected costs. See the zoning list to get a sense of potential issues.
- 5.** Pre site work: often there is work to be done pre-build in various sites. Here are a few questions to consider, which usually affect some costs:

 - Will site require major tree/brush/debris removal?
 - Will site require removal of existing structure(s)?
 - Will site require significant excavation or land movement?
- 6.** Architectural / Historical / Homeowner's Association aesthetic review: one of the zoning issues worth going into more detail on is whether you are in an area that has any kind of architectural/aesthetic review committee. When you find your site, ask your local zoning office whether there are any historical / local / neighborhood / township associations that have jurisdiction over the aesthetics of the home that you build.
- 7.** Access: a key consideration you should make when looking at your site is the site access. Many times, beautiful and remote sites have the disbenefit of requiring a greater amount of site excavation, grading, etc. For particularly challenging sites (unfortunately often ones that have great views!) the costs can be steep for long driveways, steep grades, running into granite or ledge, or having a lot of excavation because of the high grade of a piece of land. One of the services mkD often requires for sites is a Delivery Assessment to determine how to get our home to your site, and start identifying key issues related to site access in general.